



***Helping Minority Businesses
to Thrive in a Competitive Economy***

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**Remarks of Ronald N. Langston, National Director
Minority Business Development Agency
U.S. Department of Commerce**

(676 words)

- Hello, this is Ron Langston, National Director of the Minority Business Development Agency, U.S. Department of Commerce, in Washington, DC.
- In keeping with the President's pledge to rebuild New Orleans and the Gulf region, I traveled to New Orleans and Baton Rouge in mid—November to announce the opening of the Louisiana Minority Business Opportunity Center.
- At the grand opening, I was joined by
 - The Honorable Melvin 'Kip' Holden, Mayor of Baton Rouge,

- Donna Addkison, Executive Assistant to the Mayor of New Orleans
 - representatives from the New Orleans and Baton Rouge Chambers of Commerce, and
 - Ms. Loretta Poree, the Program Director for the Louisiana Minority Business Opportunity Center.
- The purpose of the center is to serve minority businesses with accessing and competing for in federal, state and private sector contracts. The center will match pre-qualified minority entrepreneurs with contracts, offer brokering services, provide access to buyers and business financing and facilitate joint ventures.
- The Louisiana Minority Business Opportunity Center represents one of four new centers funded by MBDA specifically to help minority businesses successfully compete for public and private sector contracts as part of the Gulf Coast rebuilding efforts.
- To date MBDA has helped over...
 - 340 displaced minority firms with disaster relief, emergency loans and insurance claims;

- reconstruct business plans and other key business documents;
 - assisted about 1,100 minority businesses with the identification of procurement opportunities;
 - conducted education and outreach activities reaching more than 4,000 minority businesses;
 - and assessed more than 1,180 firms as viable minority businesses with the capacity to participate in the rebuilding of New Orleans.
- As I stated in New Orleans, providing minority businesses an opportunity to participate in the rebuilding of the Gulf will be critical to the economic resurgence of the Gulf Region.
- All sectors of the business community and all regions of the country must be fully engaged in America's economic growth and global competitiveness.
- For 2007, MBDA will continue its focus on rebuilding minority businesses in the Gulf; and fulfilling the President's American Competitiveness Initiative.

- For the minority business community this means....encouraging science and technology research, commercializing innovations for the global marketplace, developing a well-educated workforce, and promoting entrepreneurship as a career choice for minority youth.
- Together, we can maintain and build upon America's competitive edge. And with each contract that a minority business gets, we create more jobs, and we will improve the quality of life and standard of living for our growing communities.
- As the President has previously stated, “one of the great engines of our growing economy is our Nation’s capacity to innovate.”
- America benefits from innovations by past and present minority scientists turned entrepreneurs such as Elijah McCoy. Mr. McCoy was trained in mechanical engineering and developed the lubricator cup for trains, better known as the ‘the real McCoy.’

- Another example of minority businesses creating innovations in technology is our 2006 National Minority Entrepreneur of the Year award winner, Ms. Kusum Kavia of Combustion Associates who produces electricity out of waste gas.
- ‘Federal investment in research and development has proved critical to keeping America’s economy strong by generating knowledge and tools upon which new technologies are developed.’
- When minority businesses compete, America competes. When minority businesses win in the global economy, our communities win. Historically, we know that minority businesses help to build the socio-economic base of minority communities. And with the growing U.S. minority population, minority businesses can play an important role in fighting poverty, and bridging educational and health disparities.
- That is why MBDA is committed to being the strategic growth partner for minority businesses. Our network of over 40 centers throughout the United States can assist you with accessing capital, brokering deals,

creating joint venturing opportunities and competing for public and private contracts.

- To find a center nearest to you, call 1-888-324-1551 or visit www.mbda.gov.
- On behalf of Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez and President George W. Bush Thank you.